

# VOA NEWS

February 14, 2024

This is VOA News. I'm Joe Ramsey.

Officials have said Israel and U.S.-designated terrorist group Hamas are making progress in cease-fire and hostage release talks. AP correspondent Karen Chammas reports.

An Israeli tank rolls near Gaza on the southern Israeli border as explosions could be heard from inside the enclave.

Negotiations between the two sides have been continuing in Cairo, a day after Israeli forces rescued two captives in Rafah. More than 70 Palestinians were killed in the raid.

The mass destruction and death was a glimpse of what a full-scale Israeli ground advance into the area would look like. A cease-fire deal, on the other hand, would give people in Gaza a desperately needed respite from Israel's offensive now in its fifth month.

I'm Karen Chammas.

The head of Lebanon's Hezbollah said on Tuesday his armed group's cross-border shelling into Israel would only end when Israel's, quote unquote, "aggression" on Gaza stops, saying diplomatic efforts so far to bring a halt to hostilities along Lebanon's border only seemed to benefit Israel.

Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah said his group would only stop its exchanges of fire if a full cease-fire was reached for Gaza.

The head of the United Nations nuclear watchdog warned on Tuesday Iran is not entirely transparent regarding its atomic program. That's after an official who once led Tehran's program announced the Islamic Republic has all the pieces for a weapon, quote, "in our hands."

Rafael Mariano Grossi, the director-general of the International Atomic Energy Agency, said there's loose talk about nuclear weapons more and more, including in Iran, recently.

Iran has been enriching uranium closer than ever to weapons-grade levels.

This is VOA News.

U.S. President Joe Biden on Tuesday pushed lawmakers to act quickly on a massive aid package for Ukraine, Israel and Taiwan passed by the Senate. Reuters correspondent Freddie Joyner reports.

After a Senate vote that easily surpassed the chamber's 60-vote threshold for passage, the bill to approve roughly \$95 billion in aid for Ukraine, Israel and Taiwan was sent to the House of Representatives on Tuesday.

But the foreign aid package faces an uncertain future in the Republican-controlled House.

"This is a critical act for the House to move. It needs to move. The bill provides urgent funding for Ukraine so it can keep defending itself."

President Joe Biden pressed the chamber to move on the bill swiftly.

Reuters correspondent Freddie Joyner.

Indonesians started voting in eastern areas of the vast country on Wednesday in an election headlined by the race to succeed popular President Joko Widodo, whose influence could determine who takes the helm of the world's third-largest democracy.

Nearly 259,000 candidates are contesting 20,000 posts across 17,000 islands in the world's biggest single-day election, but all eyes are on the presidency and the fate of Widodo's ambitious agenda after a decade in charge of Southeast Asia's biggest economy.

The U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights is alarmed by rising tensions in Senegal and is calling for a broad-based, inclusive elections to be held as soon as possible. Lisa Schlein reports for VOA from Geneva.

Volker Türk, the United Nations human rights chief, says he is deeply concerned by the rise in violence and increasing violations of human rights following last week's suspension of the presidential election, which had been set for February 25.

His spokeswoman, Liz Throssell, says initially peaceful protests have since turned violent. She says at least three young men have been killed and at least 266 people reportedly have been arrested, including journalists, during protests across the country.

Lisa Schlein, for VOA News, Geneva.

The Kansas City Chiefs' overtime defeat of the San Francisco 49ers in the Super Bowl, with Taylor Swift cheering in the stands, drew a record 123.7 million U.S. viewers, according to Nielsen estimates On Tuesday.

It was not only the largest viewership recorded in the 58-year history of the Super Bowl, but also according to Nielsen data, the biggest U.S. audience for any event since the first astronauts walked on the Moon in 1969.

The audience figure also includes those who watched in places such as bars and restaurants.

I'm Joe Ramsey.